

RETAIL PRICES—SEPTEMBER QUARTER, 1954.

The "C" Series Index Numbers.

Index numbers of retail prices ("C" Series) for the September quarter of 1954 (with the weighted average of the six capital cities in 1923-1927 as base of 1,000) were as shown below.

"C" Series Retail Price Index Numbers and Percentage Increases<sup>a</sup>, September Quarter, 1954.

City.		Index Number.	Increase from Year Ended June, 1939.	Increase from September Quarter, 1953.	Increase from June Quarter, 1954.
			%	%	%
Brisbane	..	2,150	149.1	0.3	-0.6
Toowoomba	..	2,173	155.3	0.1	-1.1
Rockhampton	..	2,191	154.5	0.6	-1.1
Townsville	..	2,270	148.9	0.8	-0.8
Bundaberg	..	2,144	154.9	1.1	-0.9
Warwick	..	2,168	163.7	1.0	-0.6

a Minus (-) indicates decrease.

The "C" Series index number for Brisbane in the September quarter of 1954 registered reasonable stability in retail prices. Clothing and footwear prices and prices of miscellaneous items changed very little, and house rent recorded a small rise of 0.7 per cent. Food and grocery prices showed the greatest change with a decrease of 1.5 per cent. The net effect on the total index was a decrease of 0.6 per cent., making this the second successive quarter to record a fall. The decrease in the food and groceries index was, however, the net result of a number of individual commodity price movements, some upward and some downward, in which a seasonal fall in potatoes was predominant. The index therefore indicated price stability rather than any definite downward trend. Price movements were similar in other Queensland cities except that in most of them the decrease for the quarter was greater than in Brisbane, principally owing to the absence in those centres of an increase in meat prices as was recorded in Brisbane.

The combined index for Queensland (weighted average for the "five towns") decreased from 2,177 in the June quarter of 1954 to 2,162 in the September quarter. In the September quarter of 1953, this index was 2,154, thus showing a net increase of 0.4 per cent. over the recent twelve months. This was the smallest increase in any twelve months period since 1945. The index number for Brisbane showed an increase of 0.3 per cent. over the latest twelve months, compared with 2.3 per cent. in the twelve months ended September, 1953, and 25.1 per cent. during the twelve months ended December, 1951, when prices were rising at their fastest. Compared with the pre-war year 1938-39, Brisbane retail prices in September quarter of 1954 had risen by 149.1 per cent., and £1 today would be required to purchase goods and services represented in the regimen which could have been bought for 8s. 0d. in 1938-39.

Percentage changes during the last quarter and since 1938-39 in food and groceries, clothing and footwear, and miscellaneous items are shown in the following table.

Retail Prices, Percentage Increases<sup>a</sup>, September Quarter, 1954.

City.	Food and Groceries.		Clothing and Footwear.		Miscellaneous Items.	
	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From June Quarter, 1954.	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From June Quarter, 1954.	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From June Quarter, 1954.
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Brisbane ..	180.8	-1.5	275.0	-0.3	108.5	0.1
Toowoomba	201.4	-1.8	271.9	-0.8	106.2	-0.7
Rockhampton	179.8	-2.7	266.0	0.1	117.6	-0.1
Townsville	173.3	-2.1	272.6	-	118.5	0.4
Bundaberg	176.3	-1.9	267.2	-	104.2	-0.1
Warwick ..	196.6	-1.3	267.6	-0.2	113.2	-

a Minus (-) indicates decrease.



Food and Groceries.

For the second successive quarter, decreases were recorded in the food and grocery index numbers for the six cities for which the index is calculated. The principal items which decreased in price were potatoes, onions, eggs, and bacon. These decreases were partly offset by increases in the prices of tea, soap, and, in Brisbane, meat. The range in the variations in the food and grocery index numbers (from a decrease of 1.3 per cent. in Warwick to a decrease of 2.7 per cent. in Rockhampton) was due chiefly to potato prices decreasing by larger amounts in some cities than in others, and to meat prices increasing in Brisbane while they remained unchanged in the other cities.

Clothing and Miscellaneous.

As in the previous quarter, only small fluctuations were recorded in the prices of clothing, footwear, and miscellaneous items.

Rent (4 and 5 Roomed Houses).

The rent index increased in Brisbane by 0.7 per cent. but remained stationary in the other cities covered by the survey.

Comparison of Costs in Queensland Cities.

The following table shows the amounts, for the various Queensland cities, required in September quarter, 1954, to purchase the quantity of goods or housing which would have cost £1 in Brisbane.

Amounts Required in Various Cities to Purchase Equivalent of £1 in Brisbane.

City.	All Groups.			Food and Groceries.			Rent (4 and 5 Rooms).			Clothing and Footwear.			Miscellaneous Items.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Brisbane ..	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Toowoomba ..	1	0	2 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	5	1	0	2 $\frac{1}{2}$	19	10		1	0	5 $\frac{1}{4}$
Rockhampton ..	1	0	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	10	18	10		19	10 $\frac{3}{4}$		1	1	2 $\frac{1}{2}$
Townsville ..	1	1	1 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	1	8 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	5 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	1 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	1	11 $\frac{1}{2}$
Bundaberg ..		19	11 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	9	16	7 $\frac{1}{4}$		19	9 $\frac{3}{4}$		1	0	5
Warwick ..	1	0	2	1	0	10 $\frac{1}{2}$	15	10 $\frac{3}{4}$		19	11 $\frac{3}{4}$		1	1	6 $\frac{1}{2}$

In relation to Brisbane, the prices of all groups together decreased slightly during the recent quarter in four of the five provincial cities for which the index numbers are calculated. The other city (Warwick) maintained the same relativity with Brisbane prices as in June quarter. Bundaberg, where prices in June quarter, 1954, had risen to parity with Brisbane prices, again became the cheapest of the six cities, and the amount required in Bundaberg to purchase goods costing £1 in Brisbane fell to 19s. 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. for September quarter.

The prices of food and groceries in each of the five provincial cities are higher than in Brisbane, but during the recent quarter their excess over Brisbane prices decreased except in Warwick where the excess increased slightly. The variations during September quarter in these relative food and grocery prices ranged from an increase of  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the £ in Warwick to a decrease of 3d. in the £ in Rockhampton.

Clothing and footwear prices in all five provincial cities are closer to Brisbane prices than the prices of other items, and during September quarter were slightly cheaper than in Brisbane in all of the cities covered by the survey except Townsville, where an additional 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. would have been needed to purchase clothing and footwear costing £1 in Brisbane.

Miscellaneous items were substantially more expensive in all five provincial cities than in Brisbane. Bundaberg and Toowoomba prices were closest to Brisbane, the additional costs in these cities being 5d. and 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ d., respectively, in the £. In the other three cities the margins over Brisbane prices have become greater during the last two years, and, in the recent quarter, the extra costs of items in this group costing £1 in Brisbane were 1s. 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in Townsville, 1s. 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in Warwick, and 1s. 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in Rockhampton. Electricity, gas, and firewood are important in this group.

Commonwealth and State Basic Wage Rates.

The Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration has suspended automatic ("cost of living") adjustments since the adjustment which operated from 1st August, 1953.

State Industrial Courts in New South Wales, South Australia, and Western Australia have not made any basic wage adjustments since their declarations following the publication of index numbers for the June quarter of 1953. In Victoria, where wages are determined by Wages Boards, special legislation required the continuation of the automatic adjustment of wage rates in accordance with variations in retail price index numbers. Variations in the Melbourne index numbers since June quarter, 1953, have caused a net decrease of 1s. (which included a decrease of 2s. in the latest quarter) in the basic rate for males. In Tasmania, where rates are also controlled by Wages Boards, an adjustment of 10s. which operated after the publication of the September quarter index numbers early in November was cancelled from 9th December, and the rates remain at their August 1953 level.

In Queensland, the State Industrial Court, after the publication of the index numbers for the September quarter of 1953, increased the basic wage by 3s. for males and 2s. for females, and, following the publication of the December quarter index numbers, a further increase of 3s. for males and 2s. for females was made. The Court considered that the changes in the index numbers in the March, June, and September quarters of 1954 did not indicate a significant economic trend and no basic wage adjustment was made after 1st February, 1954.

Retail Prices and Basic Wage Rates.Australian Capital Cities.

Capital City.	Retail Price Index ("C" Series).			Commonwealth Basic Wage.	State Basic Wage.			
	June Quarter, 1953.	June Quarter, 1954.	September Quarter, 1954.	Males. <sup>a</sup>	Males.	Females.	Date of Operation.	
				£   s.   d.	£   s.   d.	£   s.   d.		
Brisbane	2,115	2,163	2,150	10   18   0	11   5   0	7   11   0	1. 2. 54	
Sydney	2,360	2,373	2,372	12   3   0	12   3   0	9   2   0	1. 8. 53	
Melbourne	2,279	2,295	2,273	11   15   0	b	b	-	
Adelaide	2,238	2,265	2,289	11   11   0	11   11   0	8   13   0	1. 8. 53	
Perth	2,290	2,475	2,512	11   16   0	12   6   6	8   0   3	28. 7. 53	
Hobart	2,351	2,402	2,394	12   2   0	b	b	-	

a The female rates are 75 per cent. of the male rates.

b No State wage declared. The rate fixed by the Commonwealth Court was usually followed to a large extent until August, 1953. For subsequent adjustments see paragraphs above.

S. E. SOLOMON,  
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BRISBANE.

8th November, 1954.



Table 1 - The "C" Series Retail Prices Index.

(Base: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1,000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended Sept., 1954.	Quarter Ended -				
				Sept., 1953.	Dec., 1953.	March, 1954.	June, 1954.	Sept., 1954.
Brisbane .. ..	863	1,079	2,169	2,143	2,176	2,187	2,163	2,150
Toowoomba .. ..	851	1,092	2,192	2,172	2,193	2,204	2,197	2,173
Rockhampton .. ..	861	1,084	2,207	2,177	2,202	2,221	2,215	2,191
Townsville .. ..	912	1,119	2,285	2,251	2,277	2,304	2,288	2,270
Bundaberg .. ..	841	1,059	2,151	2,121	2,137	2,158	2,163	2,144
Weighted Average								
Five Towns .. ..	864	1,082	2,180	2,154	2,184	2,197	2,177	2,162
Warwick .. ..	822	1,073	2,174	2,147	2,168	2,180	2,180	2,168

Table 2 - Food and Groceries Retail Prices Index.

(Base: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1,000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended Sept., 1954.	Quarter Ended -				
				Sept., 1953.	Dec., 1953.	March, 1954.	June, 1954.	Sept., 1954.
Brisbane .. ..	856	971	2,459	2,429	2,488	2,504	2,440	2,404
Toowoomba .. ..	814	1,010	2,491	2,481	2,496	2,516	2,498	2,453
Rockhampton .. ..	895	1,012	2,554	2,494	2,547	2,591	2,573	2,504
Townsville .. ..	955	1,057	2,660	2,609	2,660	2,703	2,666	2,610
Bundaberg .. ..	903	1,027	2,529	2,498	2,521	2,557	2,544	2,495
Weighted Average								
Five Towns .. ..	864	984	2,484	2,452	2,506	2,526	2,472	2,431
Warwick .. ..	846	1,000	2,531	2,497	2,523	2,549	2,541	2,509

Table 3 - Clothing and Footwear Retail Prices Index.

(Base: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1,000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended Sept., 1954.	Quarter Ended -				
				Sept., 1953.	Dec., 1953.	March, 1954.	June, 1954.	Sept., 1954.
Brisbane .. ..	829	1,454	3,113	3,116	3,110	3,117	3,117	3,109
Toowoomba .. ..	829	1,429	3,108	3,123	3,114	3,127	3,108	3,083
Rockhampton .. ..	845	1,477	3,091	3,113	3,089	3,092	3,089	3,093
Townsville .. ..	840	1,457	3,131	3,160	3,129	3,134	3,129	3,130
Bundaberg .. ..	839	1,447	3,087	3,121	3,092	3,094	3,081	3,081
Weighted Average								
Five Towns .. ..	831	1,454	3,112	3,119	3,110	3,116	3,114	3,107
Warwick .. ..	825	1,441	3,101	3,098	3,090	3,095	3,112	3,107